

Unapproved
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2010

The Wethersfield Town Council attended a Planning and Zoning Commission meeting on Tuesday, January 5, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present: Councilor Drake, Hurley, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri, and Chairperson Hemmann

Present from the Planning and Zoning Commission: Joseph L. Hammer, Chr., Thomas A. Harley, Robert P. Jurasin, V. Chr., Philip Knecht, Clerk, Earl R. Munroe, Frederick E. Petrelli, Jr., Richard P. Roberts, Vice Chairperson, Thomas Dean, George B. Oickle, James Hughes (alternate), Dave Edwards (alternate)

Absent: Councilor Roberts, Kotkin, and Deputy Mayor Console

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, Denise Bradley, Assistant Town Planner, and Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk

Philip Knecht, Clerk took attendance of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

DISCUSSION CONCERNING PLANNING AND ZONING ISSUES OF MUTUAL INTEREST AND CONCERN

Joseph Hammer, Chairperson of the Planning and Zoning Commission welcomed Dave Edwards, a newly appointed alternate and then welcomed the Town Councilors to the meeting.

Chairperson Hemmann thanked the Planning and Zoning Commission. She said that the Town Council is here with the purpose of opening lines of communication between Boards and Commission and Town Council. She would like to look at quality of life issues and difficulties with enforcement of some of the issues. She would also like to look at the ordinances again and see if they need updating. She asked if the Planning and Zoning Commission members could identify five or six items or issues of concern that the Town Council could look at. The Town Council would also like to look at ways to stay business friendly. The new building permit process should facilitate that. She asked what items come back to the Planning and Zoning Commission consistently. Residents have complained about commercial vehicles parked overnight in residential neighborhoods, vehicles parked overnight on streets, vehicles parked on a snow shelf. The Town Council also needs to look at enforcement issues.

Joseph Hammer said that the Planning and Zoning Commission may cover some issues while other issues are covered by Town ordinances. Signage is an issue for both quality of life and being business friendly. Adult entertainment establishments are also a concern.

Rich Roberts said that some are Planning and Zoning Commission issues – overnight parking on streets, businesses in residents’ homes, signs in wrong places. Other issues fall under Town ordinances – blight, unregistered vehicles, and tag sale signs. For parking on the snow shelf and on lawns, jurisdiction needs to be established. The establishment of enforcement also needs to be addressed. Are anonymous complaints looked into or only complaints with names? Does Town staff patrol neighborhoods?

George Oickle said that the last thing would be enforcement. The Chief Building Official could be an enforcement official. He said that it happens in smaller communities. He is concerned with XXX (adult establishments). There are some businesses already in Town. The Town may want to revisit this issue and create an ordinance. He said that unregistered vehicles are not permitted in yards. The size of vehicles in yards has been addressed.

Joseph Hammer said that adult establishments need to go through zoning regulations. The Town could create a special permit even if the establishment is looking at a commercial property. Staff should look at taking the necessary action.

Councilor Drake said that it is all part of economic development, getting businesses in Town and having people want to live in Town. People should have the expectation that they are not going to live next to a junk yard. The Town needs to work on enforcement. He said that he would like the Planning and Zoning Commission to give the Town Council five or six issues that are of concern and the Town Council can look at enforcement of them.

George Oickle wanted to know how stricter enforcement was business friendly.

Councilor Drake said that Wethersfield is primarily a residential Town. He said that when people come into Town they should be able to expect property maintenance. Wethersfield should want people in Town who are more active and take care of their properties. 30 years ago there was a higher expectation. He would like to get back to that level.

Robert Jurasin said that parking is different in residential neighborhoods. There is a waiver for parking in commercial areas in applications for businesses. If it is done too broadly it could create long term problems.

Councilor Drake said that he is looking at residential issues.

Councilor Hemmann said that there is an active green energy group. She asked if the Planning and Zoning Commission would look at zoning for fuel cells.

The Planning and Zoning Commission moved the public comment portion of the agenda out of order so that the public could speak before the Town Council left.

Linda Case, 103 Park Avenue, said that she endorsed Councilor Drake's comments. There are flagrant parking problems in residential areas. It is easy to remedy. No vehicles should be parked in yards. The Town shouldn't allow entire yards to pave either. It is a terrible slummy look. She said that most of the problems are in the northend of Town. These issues should be addressed in an upbeat brochure mailed to all residents. This is a sensitive issue. The Town should raise consciousness. It is awkward to tell on neighbors.

George Oickle asked if she has gone to the Town.

Linda Case said that she does not want to seem as elitist. This should come from the Town. Keep the information upbeat in a brochure.

Robert Smart, 62 Church Street, said that he agrees with much of what was said but he shares a driveway with his neighbors. Sometimes when his son stays overnight he needs to park his car on the snow shelf so his neighbors have access to the driveway. He cautioned not to go too fast or too far.

Lee Sekas, 117 Wells Road, said that he doesn't want Wethersfield to be a police state but some enforcement is needed. He asked why it takes over a year to get a sidewalk repaired. He asked who is enforcing these complaints. The laws are good but enforcement is needed.

George Oickle said that Mr. Sekas works at Stop and Shop and uses the sidewalks to get to work. He asked if the sidewalks not shoveled were his only complaint.

Lee Sekas said that there are repair work that are needed, too.

Philip Rouquie, 410 Church Street, said that he lived on Hewitt Street and it took him a long time to sell his house because the apartment building across the street always had cars parked on the snow shelf. It should be a rule – no parking on the snow shelf. It is a safety issue and impacts property values. He is proud to live in Town and people need to keep properties beautiful. The problems are not only in the northend of Town.

Marge Magistri, 46 Bunce Road, said that she has a neighbor who parks a commercial vehicle in the yard. She called the police and they said that it is legal. The neighbor threw stones in the front yard.

John Williams, 189 Wolcott Hill Road, said that Nott Street is a raceway and has parking on the snow shelf. It poses a safety issue. It is happening all over Town.

Joseph Hammer said that he has observed parking on Garden Street near Main Street on both sides of the street. It has created a very narrow street.

Unapproved

*January 5, 2010 Notes
Page 4*

The Planning and Zoning Commission allowed the public to speak on other Planning and Zoning issues.

Rich Roberts asked what the Commission should do from here. He would like staff to look at other Towns and see what they have for regulations and see where the Town has loop holes. He hoped they could get together in a couple of month to revisit these issues.

Joseph Hammer said that the Planning and Zoning Commission can discuss issues before the end of tonight's meeting and have the Town Planner bring them to the Town Manager.

Fred Petrelli said that at one time the Health District helped residents with the removal of poison ivy. They do not do this anymore. Also, rotting trees on a property that fall on another property are not the responsibility of the original homeowners'. The Town doesn't intervene. It is a quality of life issue.

Philip Knecht said that the crossing lights are set to fast, a pedestrian has to run across the street. He said that bus kiosks need to be cleaned so that people can see out of them.

George Oickle said that the comprehensive plan is up for renewal soon and the Commission needs to look at multi-use zoning.

Chairperson Hemmann thanked the Planning and Zoning Commission for having this dialogue.

Joseph Hammer thanked the Town Council and said that he looked forward to working with it on these issues.

At 7:51 p.m., the Town Council members left the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting and it resumed its business.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk